

Lauren Shade
JrCOSTEP – 2006
East Tennessee State University
Phoenix Area IHS

My name is Lauren Shade and I am a rising senior at East Tennessee State University and I am an Environmental Health major. I served my JrCOSTEP duty with the Indian Health Service in San Carlos, AZ serving the San Carlos Apache Tribe.



My JrCOSTEP experience has been phenomenal in that I've been exposed to a variety of different aspects of the Environmental Health field as well as unique culture. My preceptor, LCDR Stephen Piontkowski, has exposed me to the social, political, and economical aspects of Environmental Health and I've been able to see how things I've already learned in the classroom are applied in the "real world." Also, I've learned a great deal that will help me excel in classes I've yet to take. As an Environmental Health Officer, I conducted a rabies clinic, investigated animal bites, trapped mosquitoes, assisted my preceptor with food sanitation surveys and food handler training courses, and worked with injury prevention. Animal bite investigations were performed following bite incidents; I would locate the dog that bit a patient and place it under observation for a ten-day period to ensure the dog did not have Rabies virus. Mosquito trapping was done to check if any mosquitoes carried West Nile virus. During food sanitation surveys I evaluated the food safety practices of a variety of venues ranging from small retail stores to large kitchens that serve several hundred meals a day. Injury prevention included performing occupant restraint surveys to gather data on seatbelt use. These tasks/activities were done in an effort to attain the highest possible level of health for the San Carlos Apache Tribe.

While serving my JrCOSTEP position, I discovered I have a strong interest in vector control as well as food sanitation. IHS exposed me to an array of Environmental Health issues which helped me to determine what areas I am most passionate about within the field. This will be valuable to me in finding out which career path within Environmental Health I want to follow.

I would strongly recommend a COSTEP position to my peers because I don't feel there is a program that provides individuals with a better learning environment.